

Amendments to the Claims:

8. (Currently Amended) The bale kicker assembly of claim 7, wherein the lifting and lowering arrangement comprises a cylinder assembly interconnected with the inner kicker section, wherein the cylinder assembly includes an extendible and retractable member operable to cause movement of the inner kicker section between its lowered and raised positions.

9. (Currently Amended) A round baler, comprising:
a bale-forming chamber defined by a series of side-by-side baler belts;

a tailgate with which the baler belts are engaged, wherein the tailgate is movable between a closed position during bale formation and an open position for discharging the bale rearwardly from the bale-forming chamber; and

a bale kicker for facilitating movement of the bale onto the ground when the tailgate is in its open position and the bale is discharged from the bale-forming chamber, comprising an inner section located below the bale-forming chamber, wherein the inner section defines an inner end and an outer end and, wherein the inner end of the inner section is pivotably mounted to the baler for movement between a raised retaining position and a lowered discharge position, wherein the outer end of the inner section is moveable vertically between a raised position and a lowered position during movement of the inner section between the raised retaining position and the lowered discharge position, and an outer section movably mounted to the outer end of the inner section, wherein the outer section is configured to engage the ground when the inner section is in its lowered position to facilitate movement of the bale onto the ground, and is configured to engage the

bale when the inner section is moved to its raised retaining position to prevent movement of the bale toward the baler during movement of the tailgate from its open position toward its closed position.

12. (Currently Amended) A round baler, comprising:
- a bale-forming chamber defined by a series of side-by-side baler belts;
 - a tailgate with which the baler belts are engaged, wherein the tailgate is movable between a closed position during bale formation and an open position for discharging the bale rearwardly from the bale-forming chamber; and
 - a bale kicker for facilitating movement of the bale onto the ground when the tailgate is in its open position and the bale is discharged from the bale-forming chamber, comprising an inner section located below of the bale-forming chamber, wherein the inner section is movable between a raised retaining position and a lowered discharge position, and an outer section movably mounted to the inner section, wherein the outer section is configured to engage the ground when the inner section is in its lowered position to facilitate movement of the bale onto the ground, and is configured to engage the bale when the inner section is moved to its raised retaining position to prevent movement of the bale toward the baler during movement of the tailgate from its open position toward its closed position;
- wherein the outer section of the bale kicker is movably mounted to the inner section by means of a pivot connection interposed between the inner section of the bale kicker and an inner end defined by the outer section of the bale kicker, wherein the pivot connection enables the outer section of the bale kicker to pivot freely relative to the inner section when the inner section is moved to its

lowered discharge position, in response to engagement of an outer end defined by the outer section with the ground; and

a stop arrangement interposed between the inner section and the outer section of the bale kicker for lifting the outer section upwardly when the inner section is moved from its lowered discharge position to its raised retaining position, wherein the stop arrangement is configured so as to lift the outer end of the outer section upwardly when the inner section attains a predetermined position during movement from its lowered discharge position toward its raised retaining position, to move the bale off the outer section of the bale kicker, and to maintain the outer end of the outer section at an elevation above the ground sufficient to prevent the bale from rolling on the ground toward the baler when the inner section of the bale kicker is in its raised retaining position.

15. (Currently Amended) A round baler, comprising:

a bale-forming chamber defined by a series of side-by-side baler belts;

a tailgate with which the baler belts are engaged, wherein the tailgate is movable between a closed position during bale formation and an open position for discharging the bale rearwardly from the bale-forming chamber; and

a bale kicker for facilitating movement of the bale onto the ground when the tailgate is in its open position and the bale is discharged from the bale-forming chamber, comprising an inner section located below of the bale-forming chamber, wherein the inner section is movable between a raised retaining position and a lowered discharge position, and an outer section movably mounted to the inner section, wherein the outer section is configured to engage the ground when

the inner section is in its lowered position to facilitate movement of the bale onto the ground, and is configured to engage the bale when the inner section is moved to its raised retaining position to prevent movement of the bale toward the baler during movement of the tailgate from its open position toward its closed position; and

a sensor arrangement for detecting the presence of a bale on the bale kicker when the tailgate is in its open position, and for preventing movement of the tailgate from its open position toward its closed position when the bale is located in a predetermined position on the bale kicker, wherein the tailgate is movable between its open and closed positions by means of one or more tailgate cylinder assemblies which are extendible and retractable so as to move the tailgate between its open and closed positions, wherein the sensor arrangement interacts with a pressurized fluid circuit in which the tailgate cylinder assemblies are arranged, so as to prevent operation of the tailgate cylinder assemblies to move the tailgate to its closed position from its open position, wherein the sensor arrangement includes a pivotable arm movable between a first position when engaged with a bale in a predetermined location on the bale kicker, and a second position when the bale is moved outwardly past the predetermined location on the bale kicker, wherein the arm is interconnected with a valve actuator, wherein the valve actuator is movable from an operative position in which the valve actuator actuates a valve in the pressurized fluid circuit when the inner section of the bale kicker is moved from its lowered discharge position to its raised retaining position and the arm is in its first position, and is movable to a disengaged position in which the valve actuator fails to actuate the valve when the inner section of the bale kicker is moved from its lowered discharge position to its raised retaining

position, wherein failure to actuate the valve prevents operation of the tailgate cylinder assemblies so as to prevent movement of the tailgate from its open position toward its closed position.

17. (Currently Amended) A round baler, comprising:
- a bale-forming chamber defined by a series of side-by-side baler belts;
 - a tailgate with which the baler belts are engaged, wherein the tailgate is movable between a closed position during bale formation and an open position for discharging the bale rearwardly from the bale-forming chamber; and
 - a bale kicker for facilitating movement of the bale onto the ground when the tailgate is in its open position and the bale is discharged from the bale-forming chamber, comprising an inner section located below of the bale-forming chamber, wherein the inner section is movable between a raised retaining position and a lowered discharge position, and an outer section movably mounted to the inner section, wherein the outer section is configured to engage the ground when the inner section is in its lowered position to facilitate movement of the bale onto the ground, and is configured to engage the bale when the inner section is moved to its raised retaining position to prevent movement of the bale toward the baler during movement of the tailgate from its open position toward its closed position, wherein the outer section of the bale kicker is movably mounted to the inner section by means of a pivot connection interposed between the inner section of the bale kicker and an inner end defined by the outer section of the bale kicker; and
 - a transport latch arrangement interposed between the tailgate and the outer section of the bale kicker, wherein the transport latch arrangement is

operable to maintain the outer section of the bale kicker in an elevated position when the round baler is not in use, wherein the transport latch arrangement comprises a depending latch member extending downwardly from the tailgate and engaged with the outer section of the bale kicker, and wherein the latch member is adapted to move along the outer section of the bale kicker during movement of the tailgate from its closed position toward its open position, and wherein the latch member and the outer section of the bale kicker are configured so as to enable the latch member to move out of engagement with the outer section of the bale kicker when the tailgate is moved to its open position.